

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 were originally filed in the present application. Claims 10-13 are currently canceled without prejudice or disclaimer in response to a previous restriction requirement. Claims 3, 6, and 15 are also currently canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and new claims 21-27 are currently added. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 14, and 16-27 are currently pending in the present application.

Reconsideration of this application in light of the above amendments and the following remarks is requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claim 1

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 4-7, and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,522,579 to Hoenigschmid ("Hoenigschmid"). However, the Examiner also noted that previously-pending claim 3 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of its base claim. Thus, claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of previously-pending claim 3. Consequently, it is believed that claim 1 and its dependent claims are allowable over Hoenigschmid. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the §102(b) rejection of claims 1, 4-7, and 9.

Claim 14

Claims 14 and 17-20 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hoenigschmid. However, the Examiner also noted that previously-pending claim 15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of its base claim. Thus, claim 14 has been amended to include the subject matter of previously-pending claim 15. Consequently, it is believed that claim 14 and its dependent claims are allowable over Hoenigschmid. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the §102(b) rejection of claims 14 and 17-20.

New Claim 21

New claims 21-27 also cannot be rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hoenigschmid. That is, the Examiner also noted that previously-pending claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of its base claim. Thus, previously-pending

claim 2 has been rewritten in independent form as new claim 21. Consequently, it is believed that new claim 21 and its dependent claims are allowable over Hoenigschmid.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claim 8

Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoenigschmid in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,936,293 to Parkin ("Parkin"). However, as described above, the Examiner has noted that previously-pending claim 3 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of its base claim. Thus, claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of previously-pending claim 3. Consequently, it is believed that claim 1 is allowable over the combination of Hoenigschmid and Parkin. Because claim 8 depends from claim 1, it is also believed that claim 8 is allowable over the combination of Hoenigschmid and Parkin. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the §103(a) rejection of claim 8.

New Claim 21

New claims 21-27 also cannot be rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoenigschmid in view of Parkin. That is, the Examiner also noted that previously-pending claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of its base claim. Thus, previously-pending claim 2 has been rewritten in independent form as new claim 21. Consequently, it is believed that new claim 21 and its dependent claims are allowable over the combination of Hoenigschmid and Parkin.

Conclusion

It is clear from all of the foregoing that independent claims 1, 14, and 21 are in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 16-20, and 22-27 depend from and further limit independent claims 1, 14, and 21 and, therefore, are allowable as well.

It is believed that all matters set forth in the Office Action have been addressed, and that claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 14, and 16-27 are in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and an early indication of the allowability of the claims are respectfully requested. Should the Examiner deem that an interview with Applicants' undersigned attorney would expedite consideration, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,



Dave R. Hofman
Registration No. 55,272

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HAYNES AND BOONE, LLP
901 Main Street, Suite 3100
Dallas, Texas 75202-3789
Telephone: 972/739-8630
IP Facsimile: 214/200-0853
R125776.1

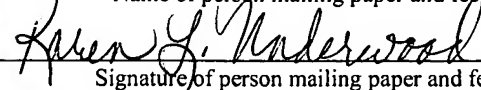
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